

Increasing awareness of the geographical problems facing women in the mountains

On October 2, 2017 there was a roundtable hosted by Utah Valley University (UVU), and organized by the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF). There were five members of the panel: Dr. Baldomero Lago who is the Vice Rector for global engagement at UVU, Dr. Jed Shilling who serves on the Board of Trustees for The Mountain Institute (TMI), Dr. Andrew Taber who is the Executive Director for The Mountain Institute, Dr. Rusty Butler who is the Main Representative at the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, and finally Ms. Wendy Jyang who is the founder of Liahona International Services. The area of focus was the promoting awareness of mountain regions and the women who live there. Each panel member spoke on various topics including, how they or their organizations works with UVU and the United Nations to help people of mountainous areas, and why people need to be made aware of these people and the issues facing them.



Round table of NGOs accredited under United Nations

First Dr. Lago addressed the audience, his remarks focused on the increasing prestige and influence of programs at UVU like the UIMF. Dr. Lago had just returned from a trip to the U.N. and he announced that UVU had just been recognized as an associate member of the United Nations Department of Public Information. Dr. Lago explained how this position UVU had just been awarded was very special, UVU is the only school in the state and region to be given this honorable status. Dr. Lago addressed the students in the audience and congratulated them on their choice to attend UVU.

Dr. Lago was followed by Dr. Shilling. Dr. Shilling addressed the importance of understanding mountains and the geographical benefits and pitfalls of settlements there. He explained how people from the mountains are often looked down upon socially and economically. He expressed his deep passion for these people and that his wife had founded TMI. He introduced the problems which women in mountain communities face. Dr. Shilling stated that many of the men leave the mountain communities to find different work when the agriculture of the mountains isn't producing enough profit. This leaves the women of these communities to tend the farm care for their children and put food on the table.



(L to R): Dr. Jed Shilling, Dr. Andrew Taber and Dr. Rusty Butler during the round table

Dr. Taber picked up where his colleague left off addressing solutions to the problems Dr. Shilling introduced. He spoke on how they were training farmers to grow different crops that would not only make them more money in the market but also reduce the environmental impact of their communities, thus increasing the standard of living and the longevity of their way of life.

There would be less need for workers to leave the mountains if they could survive on the profit of their farms. It was obvious how much Dr. Taber care for these people and he pleaded with the audience to increase awareness, by holding rallies and speaking with friends, but most importantly to get involved with the UIMF.

At this point the focus of the roundtable shifted slightly into encouraging the audience to try impact the world in a beneficial way. Dr. Butler focused his remarks on the benefits of being involved and the opportunity to present at the U.N. and detailed previous trips by UVU students trying to make a difference. He praised UVU and its president Dr. Holland.

Ms. Jyang spoke about how she became involved with the UN by starting a NGO. She encouraged students to choose an issue and create a plan to accomplish goals designed to remedy the chosen issue.

In the remaining time questions were asked on how UVU students could become involved and make a difference. The various answer revolved around joining together to create a louder voice. I was impressed in particular when Dr. Butler stated that it is hard to create change with just one voice. In conclusion, it isn't about mountains, it is about helping people and finding others would want to help then taking every chance to make a difference.

This was very interesting and inspiring event thanks to the efforts of UVU students and UIMF members in particular.

Patrick Larkin, UVU student